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AMENDMENT

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with strikethrough. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claims 1, 3-7, 10, 11, 14, 20 and 21 in accordance with the following:

1.   (Currently Amended) An information distribution apparatus for mediating distribution of information received from a sending apparatus of a sender and distributed to a receiving apparatus of a receiver, comprising:

a sending/receiving control part for conducting communication via a network with the sending apparatus and the receiving apparatus;

a distribution rank storage part for storing a distribution rank selected in advance by the receiver, before receiving distribution information from the sender, with respect to the distribution information from the sender, among distribution ranks defining distribution conditions containing designation of a summarization degree of distribution information in a plurality of levels;

a distribution information storage part for storing an original of distribution information received from the sending apparatus; and

a summarization processing part for, when receiving a request for distribution of stored distribution information received from the sending apparatus through the sending/receiving control part, obtaining from the distribution rank storage part a distribution rank previously selected by the receiver of the stored distribution information and selected based on its correspondence to the sender of the distribution information, and conducting summarization processing of the distribution information stored in the distribution information storage part in accordance with designation of a summarization degree corresponding to the obtained distribution rank,

wherein the distribution information in accordance with the distribution rank is distributed from the sending/receiving control part to the receiving apparatus.

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2.   (Original) An information distribution apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the distribution conditions further include designation of a distribution time.

3.   (Currently Amended) An information distribution apparatus according to claim 1, comprising a retransmission processing part for receiving a request for transmission of an original of distribution information from a receiver of distribution information subjected to the summarization processing, extracting an original stored in the distribution information storage part, and distributing the original to the receiving apparatus through the sending/receiving control part.

4.   (Currently Amended) An information distribution apparatus according to claim 1, comprising a rank information passing part for totalizing distribution ranks stored in the distribution rank storage part, and sending the totalized result to the sending apparatus through the sending/receiving control part.

5.   (Currently Amended) An information distribution apparatus according to claim 1, comprising an image information generating part for adding screen definition information of a rank setting screen for allowing a receiver to input the distribution rank by selection, or access information to the rank setting screen to each distribution information; and
        a distribution rank updating part for updating contents stored in the distribution rank storage part, based on a selection result which a receiver inputs by selection on the rank setting screen.

6.   (Currently Amended) An information distribution apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the rank setting screen includes a questionnaire column in addition to a selection column of the distribution rank, the information distribution apparatus comprising:
        a questionnaire result storage part for storing answer data to the questionnaire column;
        a questionnaire record updating part for receiving answer data to the questionnaire column from the receiving apparatus through the sending/receiving control part, and updating contents stored in the questionnaire result storage part; and
        a questionnaire information passing part for totalizing questionnaire results stored in the questionnaire result storage part, and sending the totalized result to the sending apparatus through the sending/receiving control part.

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7.   (Currently Amended) An information distribution apparatus according to claim 6, comprising a menu storage part for storing predetermined questionnaire contents and questionnaire contents provided by each sender, wherein questionnaire contents to be displayed in the questionnaire column on the rank setting screen are selected by each sender from questionnaire contents stored in the menu storage part.

8.   (Original) An information distribution apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the distribution rank storage part includes a region for storing a distribution rank selected by each receiver on a sender basis or on the basis of the kind of information distributed from each sender.

9.   (Original) An information distribution apparatus according to claim 1, wherein summarization processing of distribution information by the summarization processing part is either one of the following processing selected by each sender: processing of conducting summarization based on a predetermined rule and processing of outputting an abstract previously provided together with the distribution information in accordance with each distribution rank from the sender as a summarized result.

10.   (Currently Amended) An information distribution apparatus according to claim 1, comprising a standard rank determining part for determining an initial distribution rank based on evaluation by a plurality of receivers.

11.   (Currently Amended) An information distribution method for mediating distribution of information received from a sending apparatus of a sender and distributed to a receiving apparatus of a receiver, comprising:
        storing a distribution rank selected in advance by the receiver, before receiving distribution information from the sender, with respect to the distribution information from the sender, among distribution ranks defining distribution conditions containing designation of a summarization degree of distribution information in a plurality of levels, in a distribution rank storage part;
        when receiving a request for distribution of distribution information received from the sending apparatus, obtaining from the distribution rank storage part a distribution rank previously selected by the receiver of the distribution information and selected based on its correspondence to the sender of the distribution information; and

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summarizing the distribution Information in accordance with designation of a summarization degree corresponding to the obtained distribution rank to send it to the receiving apparatus.

12.   (Original) An Information distribution method according to claim 11, comprising:

when receiving a request for distribution of information from the sending apparatus, storing an original of the distribution information in a distribution information storage part;

when receiving a request for sending an original of distribution information from a receiver of distribution information subjected to the summarization processing, extracting an original stored in the distribution information storage part to distribute it to the receiving apparatus.

13.   (Original) An information distribution method according to claim 11, wherein distribution ranks stored in the distribution rank storage part are summarized as selection results of a plurality of receivers and sent to a sending apparatus.

14.   (Currently Amended) An information distribution method according to claim 11, wherein screen definition Information of a rank setting screen displayed by a receiving apparatus for allowing a receiver to input the distribution rank by selection or access information to the rank setting screen are added to each distribution information, and

a selection result of a distribution rank input by the receiver on the rank setting screen is received, and contents stored in the distribution rank storage part are updated based on the received selection result.

15.   (Original) An information distribution method according to claim 14, wherein the rank setting screen includes a questionnaire column as well as a selection column of the distribution rank,

answer data to the questionnaire column is received together with the selection result of the distribution rank from the receiving apparatus, and the received answer data is stored in a questionnaire result storage part, and

results of a questionnaire stored in the questionnaire result storage part are summarized and sent to the sending apparatus.

16.   (Original) An information distribution method according to claim 15, wherein

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predetermined questionnaire contents and questionnaire contents provided by each sender are stored in a menu storage part, and questionnaire contents selected by each sender from the menu storage part is displayed in the questionnaire column on the rank setting screen.

17.   (Original) An information distribution method according to claim 11, wherein the distribution rank is selected by each receiver on a sender basis or on the basis of a kind of information distributed from each sender.

18.   (Original) An information distribution method according to claim 11, wherein summarization processing of the distribution information is either one of the following processing selected by each sender: processing of conducting summarization based on a predetermined rule and processing of outputting an abstract previously provided together with the distribution information in accordance with each distribution rank from the sender as a summarized result.

19.   (Original) An information distribution method according to claim 11, wherein an initial distribution rank is determined based on evaluation by a plurality of receivers.

20.   (Currently Amended) A computer program product storing, in a recording medium, a program for allowing a computer to execute a processing of mediating distribution of information received from a sending apparatus of a sender and sent to a receiving apparatus of a receiver, the processing comprising:

when receiving a request for distribution of distribution information received from the sending apparatus, storing an original of the distribution information received from the sending apparatus in a distribution information storage part;

obtaining, from a distribution rank storage part, a distribution rank, selected before receiving the distribution information from the sender, defining distribution conditions containing designation of a summarization degree of the distribution information in a plurality of levels, previously selected by the receiver of the distribution information and obtained based on its correspondence to the sender of the distribution information from the sender; and

summarizing the distribution information stored in the distribution information storage part in accordance with designation of a summarization degree corresponding to the obtained distribution rank, and distributing the summarized distribution information to the receiving apparatus.

21.   (Currently Amended) A volatile or non-volatile computer-readable digital storage storing information to allow a server to perform a process, the process comprising:

at the server, storing sender distribution rankings supplied by respective users of the server;

receiving and storing email messages from senders identified by the sender distribution rankings, where the email messages are stored for downloading to clients of the users;

allowing a user to connect a client to the server to retrieve the user's stored email messages; and

at the server, using the user's sender distribution rankings, selected before receiving distribution information from the sender, to either: limit a number of messages downloaded from a particular sender, or to limit a time when messages are downloaded to the user, or to limit an amount of content in email downloaded messages.